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ABSTRACT

Based on the philosophy that the public library should be an integral part of the community it serves, a lively center of ideas and activities, and that it should know the community's people and groups thoroughly in order to understand its needs, this booklet has been prepared as an introduction for trustees, staff members, and lay leaders to the methods used in planning a program of library-community study and analysis. It outlines steps in the process of ccmmunity study. Suggestions are given for recruiting citizen participation, outlining a procedure, organizing and interpreting study results, and making use of the findings. A list of selected references refers users to the more detailed material it would be necessary to consult as the study progresses. (Author/KKC)

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ANALYZING YOUR COMMUNITY:

Basis for Building Library Service

by
Ruth Warncke

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and
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PREFACE

This booklet is part of a series of efforts aimed at assisting public libraries in Illinois to meet Illinois Library Association Standards.

MEASURES OF QUALITY was adopted in 1971 after an interesting grass roots effort to establish standards that everyone concerned would agree were worth working toward. Workshops were held all over the State to gather reactions to the first draft and each comment or objection was carefully considered before the final version was presented to the Public Library Section and the Illinois Public Library Directors Association for a vote. The result was a true synthesis of opinion and is being widely used as a yardstick for local efforts in achieving quality library service.

A Joint Committee for Implementation of Standards was named to encourage these local efforts. Because the heart of MEASURES OF QUALITY is in the commitment to service and because that commitment calls for clear goals and objectives, one of the committee's first major efforts was a series of workshops on goal setting. These workshops were called PASS 1, The First of a Series in the Program to Achieve State Standards.

PASS 1 participants went to work to learn techniques for meeting the standard which reads, "The board and the staff should jointly accept the responsibility of developing objectives and goals, tailored to meet the needs of the individual community." They soon realized that most of us, no matter how well we think we know our communities, need to know more.

That experience gave birth to the PASS 2 Workshops: ANALYZING YOUR COMMUNITY: BASIS FOR BUILDING LIBRARY SERVICE. This booklet has been prepared for PASS 2.

The Joint Committee believes the booklet opens the door to exciting new vistas. Some participants may feel that the challenge it poses -- to dig deeply into community issues and problems -- goes beyond a traditional view of library service. They will be right; it does. The committee invites anyone with doubts to ponder again the meaning of these standards from MEASURES OF QUALITY:

*The public library should be an integral part of the community it serves, a lively center of ideas and activities.

*It should seek to know the community's people and groups thoroughly in order, through this continuous study, to understand needs.

Mrs. Jean Baron, Chairman
IPLDA/PLS Joint Committee for
Implementation of Public
Library Standards
Illinois Library Association

Evanston, Illinois
March, 1974

INTRODUCTION

A public library serves people's needs for information, a word that has come to mean in library parlance "not only facts and data, but also ideas and the products of man's creative endeavors."* The library is the background source for the continuing education, recreation, and intellectual stimulation of all the people in its area of service.

To fulfill its function, the staff of the public library must have current, documented, organized information concerning its public's background, needs, and interests. Unless it has this data, and has built the library's collection, its program, and its relations with the community around the insights derived from it, the library can scarcely be of real significance to the community.

As the representatives of the community, the Board of Directors of a public library has a major role in the gathering and interpreting of data on the community. The trustees need such information in order to assess proposed programs, to set priorities, and to evaluate the library's effectiveness.

*Task Force on Adult Services Working Paper (revised July, 1973), "Community Library Services; Working Papers on Goals and Guidelines," SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL, September 1973.

This handbook is intended as an introduction for trustees, staff members, and lay leaders to the methods used in planning a program of library-community study and analysis. It outlines steps in the process, and refers users to the more detailed material it will be necessary to consult as the study progresses.

The material in this handbook is based in large part on STUDYING THE COMMUNITY: A BASIS FOR PLANNING LIBRARY ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES, American Library Association, 1960. As the subtitle indicates, this publication is focused on one type of service, but its philosophy and methods are applicable to all library services. It should be consulted by anyone seriously interested in the development of such service based on a documented knowledge of the community.

Ruth Warncke, formerly Director
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March, 1974

I
THE COMMUNITY STUDY

ASPECTS: Community study and analysis consists of six parts: formulation of questions, setting of priorities, enlistment of help of members of the community, planning of a procedure, collecting data, and analyzing the data as a base for the development of the library's collection and services. The use of the results constitutes the final aspect.

CONTINUOUS STUDY: A program of community study and analysis is a continuing activity of the library. To begin with, the whole task cannot be accomplished in the usual time limits of a special program. Community study is more like a program of reference service than like a film forum consisting of eight weekly meetings. Secondly, the community is a viable, changing entity, and what is true this year may not be true in years to come.

The hardest part of community study is to begin. Once the process has started, it has its own momentum. The more one knows, the more one wants to know. Trustees, staff, and citizens develop attitudes of curiosity and new patterns of observation. Continuing study and analysis becomes a part of the process of the continuous improvement of the library's service.

II
QUESTIONS

THE BASIC QUESTIONS: The Board of Directors begins by asking: "What do we know about this community?" and "What do we know about the library?" The answers that are sought are documented answers, not opinions or guesses. The staff will have to supply the answers from the library's files. Usually, the population of the community can be found, the organization of its government and the names of its agencies, the organization and population of its schools, the number and denominations of its churches, perhaps the names of other organizations (such as clubs, societies) and agencies (such as museums, Red Cross). The library's income, expenditures, staff, organization, and special programs are a matter of record. It may be that more documented information is available. So much the better.

THE SECOND QUESTIONS: The Board of Directors and the staff then ask: "How well does this information show the relationship of the library's service to the needs and interests of the people of the community?" Answers may be such as these: "The library's special art collection meets the interest of the clientele of the are museum and the students in the Saturday art classes." "The film and projector lending service meets the needs of the organizations that have program meetings." "The library meets the needs and interest

of the 18% (or 20% or 25%) of the total population that uses its services."

FURTHER QUESTIONS: Two sets of questions are now in order. The first is inspired by honest doubts about the first answers noted. "Does the clientele of the art museum use the art collection?" "Does the collection contain material suitable for the students in the art classes?" "How many of the organizations do use the film service?" "Why do the others not use it?" "Are all the needs and interests of the present library clientele met?" "Why does the bulk of the population not use the library?"

The second set of questions is prompted by the gaps in the information available. "Who are the people in this community?" "From where do they come?" "What education have they had?" "What age groups do they fall into?" "What work do they do?" "What interests them?" "What worries them?" "What do they join?" "Where do they look for information?"

And a related set of questions arises. "Does the library have the kinds of books and other materials that the people need and want?" "Are its services geared to their convenience?" "Is the staff able to produce the information they need?" "Is the library assisting the other organizations and agencies to serve the segments of the community they reach?"

Alert trustees and staff can formulate questions almost without end, but in this case, more is not necessarily better. When the most obvious questions have been asked, it is essential that they be arranged in priority order, so that the process of study can begin.

III
PRIORITIES

BASIS OF CHOICE: Priorities may be set in several ways. Importance is the most obvious basis. Another is immediacy or timeliness; another, speed of results. Not to be overlooked is ability, within limits of time and money, to achieve an answer.

IMPORTANCE: A review of the library's statement of purpose will give the necessary clues to the relative importance of the questions under consideration. Any good statement of purpose refers to all the people, the total population. Therefore, a question concerning only one segment of the population is less important than one concerning all. Does the purpose refer to "reliable and up-to-date information?" To "an enlightened citizenry?" To "wholesome recreation?" To "personal enrichment?" To "service to government? Groups and organizations?" Although any question can be fitted into one or more of such categories, those that are most directly related are probably the most important, provided that each such question is concerned with the relationship of library service to the people's needs and interests.

IMMEDIACY: Sometimes a question takes top priority because its answer is needed now. A new branch is planned. It is essential to

know who the people in the area are and what they want in order to select the materials, in addition to the basic collection, that will serve their needs. A proposal for a state road that will cut through the community is under consideration. It is essential to know what organizations and agencies are concerned and what programs they are planning on the question so that the library can secure the necessary materials and plan its own program to supplement the others. A new public day care center is about to open. Now is the time to find out who the children are, what their backgrounds are, what the program of the center will be, so that the library can adjust its collection and services to the new situation.

SPEED OF RESULTS: The trustees and staff may find that the amount of documented information available is so minuscule that rational decisions concerning the library's activities cannot be made. As first priority they may select those questions that can be immediately answered so that they will have some basis, however slight, for logical library development. The basic question (Section 2) can usually be answered fairly quickly by reference to the census reports, the Chamber of Commerce and newspaper offices, and representatives of organizations and agencies. Answer to just one question concerning the age range of the population can be obtained promptly, as can its concomitants "What materials and collections does the library now provide for children, for young adults, for adults, and for older people?" and "Are these materials and services provided in proportion to the numbers of these age

categories in the population?" Quickly obtained information is too broad to enable fine decisions to be made, but it is a sound base for the first steps in relating library service more closely to community needs.

TIME AND MONEY: Beyond the basic questions, the question that can be answered in the time and with the money available is the one most likely to be given priority. If the staff and trustees have had time to plan and conduct a special activity, such as a story hour series, a weekly newspaper column or radio program, an art exhibit, or book talks to schools or organizations, they can find time for community study.

The way to fit the study to limited time is to choose a specific question that relates to a specific area of library service. "Who uses library service?" is limited to a reachable group of people. It can relate to the total library, to a branch, or to a department or particular service. If the answer to "Who uses the reference collection?" is "mostly high school students," further questions suggest themselves for the next stages of the study: "Why do other library users not use the reference collection more frequently?", with its sub-questions "Does the collection suit their needs?", "Do they know that it exists?", and "Do they know how to use it?"

Another way to achieve results, even though time and personnel are limited, is to enlist the aid of people in the community. The library belongs to them and they have a vested interest in its excellence and its development.

IV
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

WHY? Asking citizens to participate in a study has many advantages beyond the facts that more hands make light work, and that two or many heads are better than one. Each person who is asked to help will have special knowledge about some part of the community. He may know where to find an expert or a corps of volunteers, who speaks for the minority groups, or what worries the parents in a particular neighborhood.

When citizens participate in the study, they are likely to see that the recommendations of the study are carried out. When such recommendations involve greater support for the library, in terms of tax money, or newspaper space, or teacher cooperation, the citizens can work for it more gracefully and effectively than the staff can. Without becoming involved in policy making, citizens who take part in the study can work with the trustees in an extension of their function of interpreting the library to the community.

Citizen participation is an American tradition. The library itself is the result of such participation. When the library extends an invitation to citizens to help, it offers them an opportunity for self-fulfillment, and increases the effectiveness of the community

as a democratic society. It also involves them in the library itself, making them aware of its contributions and of its problems, and of the interdependence of the library and the total community.

WHO? It depends on the type of study and its nature as to whom is invited to assist. A few regular users of the library might be asked to sit down with trustees and staff and talk over the idea, or if some decisions have already been made, to discuss ways of obtaining answers to a question, or to carry out the plan already made.

Since citizens may be used to plan the whole study or a part, people who know a great deal about the total community will be invited, as well as those who represent and know about segments such as business, labor, children, young people and the old, farmers, the foreign speaking, professionals, the disadvantaged, the college students. People with this kind of knowledge plus organizational ability make good planners.

Other citizens may be needed along the way to devise methods for carrying out the study, or to adapt methods others have used. Research people are good at drafting questionnaires, social scientists at developing interview schedules. To be sure that anything prepared will be attractive and palatable to the public, advertising people can be useful. For preparing the materials stenographers, multilithographers, printers, and artists are invaluable.

As the study develops people will be needed to interview, to distribute questionnaires and other material, to gather data, and to perform a number of small tasks. Here is a chance to honor organizations by asking them to seek volunteers among their memberships for these important -- and interesting -- endeavors. People to train those volunteers will be found among educators, psychologists, personnel directors and other such groups.

The reporters, those who let the community know that the study is going on and what recommendations must be put into operation, are found on newspapers and in radio and TV studios of course. Others who can play important roles in this aspect of the study are writers, public speakers, and artists.

The planners will be the core of the group that is called upon to interpret data, but as the citizens work, the trustees and the staff will note other people with analytical ability, common sense and vision to add to the core.

Whether the number of citizen participants is very small -- four or five perhaps -- or extensive, it should be representative of more than one social, economic, racial, religious and age segment of the community or the segment under study -- the more the better. The day of considering only affluent, middle class, secure people for leadership roles is past and gone for good. Citizen participation is considered in more specific detail in Section XII.

V
OUTLINING A PROCEDURE

FIRST STEPS: The procedure began with the decision, however tentative it may have been, to seek some documented information on the community as a basis for developing library service. It continued when questions were formulated, and was furthered when a question or questions assumed priority.

ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITY: The sooner the study is assigned to one trustee and one staff member the sooner the procedure will be underway. The trustee should be the one with the greatest interest, but it may have to be the one with the most time available, assuming that all the trustees are interested. In a small library the director will probably be given staff responsibility, but otherwise, the choice of a staff study director should be based on a combination of organizational ability and concern for and involvement in the community.

ACQUIRING BACKGROUND: The staff member will gather material on community study, particularly as it relates to the library. See Section XV for suggestions. The trustee and the staff member can look over the material and decide which items each will examine more thoroughly in order to know where to turn for detailed

information as it is needed. Together they will probably prepare a report to the board and to the staff, outlining possibilities for procedures and methods.

THE OUTLINE: As presented to the trustees and the staff the outline should cover such items as:

1. re-examination of the question or questions
2. recommendations for composition of the overall planning group
3. suggestions of methods to be employed
4. plans for reporting
5. suggestions for the interpretation process
6. estimated time schedule and costs
7. suggestions for necessary publicity
8. suggestions of people to carry out the various tasks

This outline should be tentative and rough. Its purpose is not to provide a program, but rather to offer the planners some idea of the nature, scope and methods with which they will deal. To refine the outline to any degree is to anticipate the work of the trustees and any other people who will be involved in the planning. The trustees begin the procedure by re-examining the question or questions to be answered in light of staff recommendations, and limiting or expanding them as the basis of the study, and then consulting whatever planning group they have established.

VI
THE PLANNING GROUP

SIZE: Any planning group should be large enough to provide interaction of minds, carrying out of responsibility, and ability to function in the face of unavoidable absences. It should be small enough to allow the expression of every shade of opinion with the strong probability that they can be reconciled within a reasonable time and decisions made. Five to fifteen members can constitute good working groups.

COMPOSITION: The trustees can select the entire planning group from their own number, if they choose, but they will be wise to add other people whose background, ideas, and energy can supplement theirs. They may even wish to limit the number of trustees in the group to one or two in order to provide opportunities to find people with specific abilities and characteristics. (See Sections IV and XII.) The staff member carrying the responsibility for the study should be assigned to work with the planning group.

SELECTION: Personnel for the planning group can be selected by the simple process of the trustees and staff naming people they think will serve well. A less personal approach is for each trustee and selected staff member to write a list of from three to ten names,

keeping in mind the characteristics desired. The lists are then coordinated, and the names mentioned most frequently are chosen. Another method is to ask for advice. If Spanish-speaking people live in the area to be studied, a trustee or staff member may seek names from someone who knows many Spanish-speaking people. The school principal, a priest or a minister, a doctor or a nurse are possibilities.

TASK: The planning group will build on the tentative outline prepared by the staff. It may want to revise or expand the outline. The planning group must first acquaint itself with the purposes of the library, the objectives of the proposed study, the questions to be answered, and the way in which they were decided upon. The staff may supply such information, but the chairman (or the group itself) decides on the way in which it is presented for assimilation.

The group then considers the various methods available for finding answers to the questions, and identifies the people to put the methods into operation.

VII
STUDY METHODS

TYPES: The methods of community and library study are those by which information, as accurate and full as possible, can be found. They consist of examining records and other documents, questioning people who have information, and observing places, situations, and activities.

EXAMINING RECORDS: To find out what educational background the adults of a community have, the census reports are examined. To determine how up-to-date the library's collection is, the shelf list, plus the periodicals list, can be examined. It may be necessary to accept the vertical file as a record in itself, and sample its holdings. Government reports, organization yearbooks, surveys made by business or other agencies, population maps, newspapers and other printed, filmed, and organized documents can yield information. The library itself should be a good source of such material, supplemented by system headquarters and the state library. Newspaper libraries or morgues are good sources, as are Chamber of Commerce offices, and such fundamental agencies as the schools.

It is necessary to know precisely what information is wanted and to inquire in advance if the record or document under consideration can yield it. The school statistics, for instance, are examined to find the number of children in each grade, or the number graduating, or the number going to college, or like information. It is no use to look for the intelligence quotients of students, which is confidential information, or for statistics on the reading preferences of the children, facts that are not officially recorded. Neither is it useful to incorporate all school statistics into the study report.

The relative accuracy and completeness of the information contained in documents should be assessed. National census reports are as accurate and complete as any such records can be. Community census figures, gathered by the Chamber of Commerce between national census data collections, while they may be useful for indicating a trend, can make little claim to exact accuracy of completeness. The annual report of the local unit of the U. S. Cooperative Agricultural and Home Extension Agency is compiled by officers of the agency for submission to several levels of government and can be accepted as factually correct. The yearbook of a local garden society has probably been written by a member from sketchy records and can, at best, be relied upon as an honest impression.

QUESTIONING PEOPLE: People can be questioned face to face, or in writing. Trained and extremely able interviewers can conduct

open-ended interviews with well-informed people to secure information, opinions, or impressions. An hour spent with the director of the Association for the Blind can yield information on the approximate number of the visually handicapped people in the community, their age, educational and economic status, the services available to them and the extent to which the services are used, informed opinion on what further services are needed, impressions concerning the attitudes of sighted people toward the blind, and reference to reports and documents containing further, exact information.

In a structured interview, rather quickly trained people can ask for specific information and opinions on specific matters. Questions that might be asked of senior citizens could be: "What hobbies do you pursue?" "Do you use public transportation to move around the community?" The answers will yield specific information. Questions yielding opinions will be such as these: "Do you find public transportation satisfactory? Why or why not?" "What do you think this community should do for older people that it is not now doing?"

People may be gathered for group interviews. A skilled leader can elicit general information and opinions, and members of the group will amend, amplify, and support what others say. Eight or ten presidents of local organizations might be asked: "What resources exist in this community to assist organizations in planning programs?" (information). "What do you think are the most serious problems facing the community right now?" (opinion).

Querying people face-to-face is a method that is probably more effective for eliciting opinions than facts. It can reveal shades of meaning and bring out hidden attitudes. It engages people's attention and can arouse their interest in the study that is going on. Even though it takes time and the assistance of experts (See Section XI), it should be seriously considered a part of most studies.

Asking questions in writing is a quick way of getting a good deal of information, either facts or opinions. Everyone is acquainted with the questionnaire. A library patron is not surprised when he is handed a questionnaire designed to find out how far he has come to the library, by what means, and how often he comes. He is used to checking a list of answers such as those following the questions: "For what reason did you come to the library today?" and "Did you find what you wanted?"

Questionnaires may be mailed to a sample of the population or hand-carried to them. They may be distributed to members of organizations, to people gathered at a community center, to heads of agencies, or to any other identified population, even to the library staff or Friends of the Library.

When a questionnaire is well-designed it is easy to tabulate and can garner an amazing amount of information. Relatively few people answer mailed questionnaires unless they have some special motivation (such as heads of agencies being queried by another agency).

Therefore, manpower is involved in the distribution of questionnaires, as well as in the tabulation of the answers. The effort, however, is not so great that the written questionnaire should be abandoned. It is a useful tool.

OBSERVING: Idle observation is of little use, but focused observation can yield much information. A person observing a community center at planned intervals over a period of several weeks with the intention of discovering how much it is used, by whom, for what purposes, and how well it seems to meet its avowed purposes can make a useful report as a basis for decisions concerning library service of the center or in the area. An automobile tour of a community by a planning committee in order to help them interpret what statistics on housing and income mean is useful. A good observer could take pictures and organize a slide show or a video tape for the use of many of the groups and individuals involved in the study. Observers assigned to library story hours or discussion groups can see more and be more objective than those who are involved in such activities.

The participants in any situation that is under observation should be introduced to the observer and told why he is there. The sponsor of the activity, if it is other than the library, should be asked for permission before the observation begins.

All of the data gathered must be properly organized if it is to be interpreted accurately for use in developing a library program.

VIII
ORGANIZING THE INFORMATION

PLANNING THE FORM: The way in which the information will be organized should be determined before the data is gathered. Since the best organization is that which shows relationships, the plan for organization will indicate whether or not all the necessary information is being collected. If it is suspected that concern for public affairs is limited to larger organizations in the community, a table listing organizations by size and indicating the subjects they deal with must be planned. If by chance, the question "How many members are there in the organization?" has been omitted, the oversight will be noticed at once, and corrected before the questionnaire is used.

LISTS -- TABLES: Specific information can be presented in lists that indicate frequency, as when people report reading various types of material, and the types, such as newspapers, magazines, paperbound books, and hard cover books, are arranged in order with the one reported most often at the top of the list. Other lists can be organized by subject, such as churches in a community listed by denomination.

When more than one factor is to be presented, information is organized into a table, to relate the item in the vertical list to the items noted horizontally. Organizations might be listed by number of members vertically, with horizontal headings indicating program interests such as home and family living, public affairs, religion, et cetera. The table would show the relationship between size and program interests. Similar tables could be constructed to show program interests in relation to sex of membership -- men, women, mixed -- or age of membership, or affiliations on the local, state and national levels.

CHARTS: A graphic way of presenting some information from tables is through charts, such as pie, bar and line charts. These may slightly oversimplify the information, but have the advantage of being highly visible for use with a group and easy to understand. The thin slice of the pie representing governmental expenditures marked "library" tells a clear story of the relationship of this slice to the others on the chart.

MAPS: The simple geographic outline map can become a dramatic description of elements comprising the community and their relationship to each other. Colors can indicate areas by average property values, and dots or pins the distribution of library borrowers. Overlays can show the relationship between services and the racial or economic status of the population, or between such barriers as highways and rivers and the institutions people need to reach.

NARRATIVES: If they are kept brief and objective, narrative reports can be useful in presenting information for interpretation. Reports of open interviews can provide materials for summaries of opinion; descriptions of communities based on planned observation can supplement statistical information; minutes of group interviews can record the concensus of opinion as well as provocative differences from the concensus.

When the data gathered are organized to emphasize the relationship of one to another, the process of interpretation is facilitated.

IX
INTERPRETING THE INFORMATION

WHO: As many people as possible should examine the reports and offer interpretations of what they mean. One will see what another misses. Tentative interpretations can be discussed by groups -- the staff, the trustees, the planning committee -- who will be likely to note any inconclusive data or forced interpretations.

WHY: Interpretation of data identifies area of action. If it can be deduced that some people of the community have interests that are not being met, or needs that are not being served, it will be obvious that some agency or institution must take action. If serious community problems are identified on which no action is being taken, programs such as education for citizen action may be required.

HOW: When the reports are examined, every conclusion should be questioned in relation to every other one. If everyone interviewed says the educational facilities in the community are excellent, but the drop-out rate is high, functional illiteracy persists, and few adult educational resources are listed, the favorable opinion would be challenged.

From such critical examination of the data, tentative lists of concerns are drawn up, with the supporting data for each one summarized. Thus, a concern (which should be stated broadly) that intercultural relations are inadequate may be supported by the facts that minority groups are not represented proportionally in government and other leadership roles, constitute more than their statistical expectation of high school drop-outs, are represented sparsely in organization membership, and are housed almost entirely in one area of the community.

The concerns are then discussed for validity, and when this is established, discussion should be directed to the question "Who needs to know what about this?" The list that evolves comprises the educational needs of the community at least in part. A concern about traffic hazards may lead to awareness that the newspapers and other media need to know that public response to a safety campaign is likely to be good; organizations need to know how to campaign for better traffic control; government officials need to know about control systems used elsewhere.

The interpretation of data is the last step in the study per se, before it is put to work. It is well to have a clear idea of how long it will take to get to that point, and how much it will cost.

X
ESTIMATED TIME SCHEDULE AND COSTS

TIME: The simplest, most limited study (a first phase) requires time for planning, for cooperation with citizens, and for gathering information. It must be fitted into the library's schedule, since staff time will be involved at every step. Materials must be designed and prepared, results of inquiries must be tabulated or summarized, and meetings -- of busy people -- must be planned and held.

A first effort -- a trial run, so to speak -- will require at least three months of staff time, one-half day a week. Compare this with the time required to prepare the budget, or to set up a bookmobile schedule, or to plan and hold an exhibit, or to write and publish an annual report. The study, properly conducted and used, will have more lasting results than any of these. It is an activity basic to effective library development, and should have first priority.

Once the initial phase has been completed, further study goes much faster. A year in which the study is the high priority activity of staff and trustees will yield immensely valuable results. After that, continuing study (for the duration of the library's existence) will take less time. Statistical information can be kept up-to-date

easily on a regular basis. Other information can be up-dated on a sample basis; for instance, a percentage of the original respondents can be queried at intervals of several years. Unless the results show a marked change, the matter may be pursued no further at that time. In areas where change can be expected, as in the officers and numbers of members of organizations, routine annual postcard questionnaires can be planned.

The time schedule should be estimated on the basis of intense activity, normal, but frustrating, delays, and first-time fumbling in the initial phase. Smoother operation, but broader scope, can be expected until the basic study is completed. The time needed for a somewhat routine operation from then on can be fitted into regular library activities.

COST: In any study, expenditures must be anticipated for materials, stationery, communications, transportation, displays, fees for specialists, and incidentals. The regular budget may cover these items, but, of course, at the expense of other activities that may be desirable. The amount spent for such items will vary with the scope of the study, and to it must be added the cost of staff time. The staff and trustees should make as careful an estimate of expenditures in advance as possible. The question should not be, "Can we afford to do this?", but, "What other activities can we drop or suspend in order to do this if we have no additional funds available?"

One item that must not be over-looked in estimating time or cost is the process of keeping the public informed of the purposes, progress, and results of the study.

XI
KEEPING THE PUBLIC INFORMED

WHY: The library is a public institution and its activities should always be a matter of public record. In the case of a community study, the public will have a special interest, since many of them will be involved, and will follow its progress with special attention. Since the study is a positive, progressive activity, news of it will present the library in an especially favorable light.

HOW: The usual avenues of communication, newspapers, radio, and TV should be employed to the full. In addition, parts of the study can be publicized in special ways. A letter to the minister, priest or rabbi of each church announcing that information will be sought, and that the role of churches in the community is a vital part of the study is an example. Such news may be printed in the church bulletin. Speeches to organizations, flyers slipped into borrower's books, or an exhibit of maps and charts in the library, at the Y's or in the community center are all approaches to be considered.

WHEN: Announcing that the study is to be undertaken is essential but not sufficient to keep the public informed. As each step is taken -- the selection of the planning committee and of other planning groups,

the distribution of questionnaires, the beginning of interviews or of any other special activity -- the news should be sent to the media. Some data can be released as it is gathered but care must be taken that it is totally accurate and not likely to be contradicted by further inquiry. The number of organizations in the community, the total of their membership, the subjects they deal with and how this situation compared with other communities of like size is information that then can be released at once. The fact that few people interviewed were critical of the library had better be held. Further inquiry may prove that few people know much about the library, or have had any experience of good library service as a basis for judging the local situation.

The compilation of the final report and its distribution is an occasion for public announcement, and provides the basis for a continuing series of announcements as measures are taken by the trustees and staff to develop library service in accord with the findings of the study.

The quality of the publicity as well as of all other aspects of the study depends on the people who produce it. No aspect of community study is more important than the selection of the participants.

XII
THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE STUDY

WHO SELECTS: The trustees make the original selection of the overall planners. One or more trustees will be a member of each sub-planning committee, and therefore will have a voice in the selection made by these groups of people to assist in the carrying out of the study. They will consider many categories of people.

THE STAFF: The group most vital to the success of the study is the staff of the library. Staff members will be chosen for their tasks on the basis of their special characteristics. Some will be especially qualified to seek information contained in documents such as the census report. Others will work well with committees, or will have a talent for compiling results for interpretation. Some will prove to be excellent interviewers, others to be good organizers of an activity such as the distribution of questionnaires. All staff members should be involved in the study, but none should be called on for effort too far beyond a normal work load. The study should be tailored to fit the staff time available.

LIBRARY CONSULTANT STAFFS: Not to be overlooked are the consultant staffs of the library system and the state library agency. Individuals chosen for these positions usually have experience that will complement that of the local staff. System consultants would bring in-depth knowledge of system policies, procedures, and services that few local staff members would possess. State library consultants would bring expertise in library law, as well as knowledge of state and national programs available to supplement the program of the local library.

AGENCY PERSONNEL: People who are paid to work in governmental, educational, volunteer, or mass media agencies are the counterparts of library staff members. Like them, the agency personnel usually know more and will understand the value of the study. For information about the agencies of the community they study, personnel will go straight to those people, many of whom will also serve on committees and take other volunteer roles.

MEMBERS OF ORGANIZATIONS: The officers of organizations are spokesmen for the members at any given time. They are the people who can give information about the organization, and can call on the membership to respond to inquiries about their reactions to the organization's program and role, as well as to various community issues. They can also enlist the membership in volunteer activities for the study. Contrary to commonly held opinions, a minority of the total population of the community belongs to organizations, usually about

one-third. Nevertheless, this segment of the citizenry is important as having declared by their membership certain interests and concerns, and because they can be communicated with readily.

KEY PEOPLE: Every community has people of special abilities of one kind or another. They will be found in the categories listed above and in other categories as well. The business persons or industrialists who have led successful Community Chest drives, those who serve on special committees at the city, county, or state level, or who have been instigators of community change are not to be overlooked, even though their public objectives may not always be consistent with those of the planners of the study. Other less prominent people may be key people in their own area of competence, as a high school teacher with great influence among her former students, or in their own neighborhoods, as a druggist who may be the confidant of the foreign-speaking people who trust him more than they do others. Some public servants such as policemen, game wardens, and public health nurses are key people to reach portions of the population no one else knows much about. Key people have special knowledge of the community, can communicate well with other people, and often can bring to a study special skills in planning, organization, and execution.

PAID SPECIALISTS: Conducting a library-community study requires specialists in many fields. Many of them will give their time willingly for the good of society; an artist may design the cover

of a report, a personnel officer may give helpful criticism of questionnaires, an adult educator may conduct a training session for leaders and recorders of group interviews. Such donated efforts usually will not take too much of the person's time and will not interfere with his ordinary professional or business activities.

From time to time, prolonged specialist assistance will be needed and must be paid for. A sociologist from the university may be required to set up the sampling procedure for the community-wide distribution of an interview schedule to identify interests and concerns, to construct and test the questionnaire, to train the interviewers, and to tabulate the results by computer. When specialists are approached, they should be told what is expected of them, and an agreement made as to whether they can volunteer their services or must charge for them. The more complex and prolonged the study, the more likely it is that paid specialists will have to be employed. They are nearly always worthy of their hire.

When the efforts of so many people have been employed and the data has been gathered and interpreted, it is time to put the study to work.

XIII
PUTTING THE STUDY TO WORK

THE LIBRARY'S ROLE: No matter what community factors, interests, concerns, or problems are uncovered, the library's role is to provide information in relation to them, and to make sure that such information is known to the people involved, and can be used effectively by them.

SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION: A community study frequently brings to notice groupings of people who are not being served well by the library, or by most other institutions. These may be the poor, the sick, minority groups, the neglected old, newcomers to the community, out-of-school young people, residents of an area separated from the rest of the community by a boundary such as a national highway, or people whose life-styles differ from the majority, such as certain religious sects or residents of communes. The concomitant study of the library will indicate whether its failure to serve such a segment is related to its collection, its hours of opening, the location of its service points, lack of service points beyond the central one, lack of staff abilities, unfortunate staff attitudes, lack of an adequate program of public information, or to other identified factors. The relevant parts of the two studies will indicate the action to be taken.

INTEREST AND CONCERNS: The collection of the library is the area most directly affected by the discovery of the community's concerns. If the library study has revealed gaps, they must be filled. The acquisition of books may not be enough. Films, recordings, maps, periodicals, pictures and other forms may be needed. Often it is necessary to relate interests and concerns to special segments of the community to know what action to take. A concern about drug use may be much better served with films than with books. An interest in some leisure time activity may require magazines.

Concerns and interests also affect the group activities program of the library. Doubts about the purity of the water supply of the community may be met with a highly publicized exhibit, in the window or elsewhere, borrowed from the State Department of Health, showing water standards and how they are met in the community. Curiosity about the Eastern religions may be satisfied by a series of film-lecture-question meetings conducted by university faculty members assisted by adherents of the beliefs presented.

PERSONAL PROBLEMS: Library staff and trustees may feel helpless to do anything regarding personal problems revealed in the study. Adding material on job training to the collection will not solve the problems of joblessness nor of inadequate salaries. A library full of material on drug addiction and film programs every night will not touch the addicts. A brochure and exhibit welcoming the newcomer is not likely to relieve deep loneliness.

To put the study to work here other community institutions must be involved. If citizen participation has been extensive and effective, the message of the study will be carried to wherever it should go. It may be hard to believe, but influential people are often unaware of the presence or extent of the problems of many of the people in the community. When they become aware, because they have worked on the study or helped publicize its results, they take action. A woman's club in one community set up classes for illiterates long before they were common, because a library-community study revealed that many people could not get jobs because they could not read adequately.

COMMUNITY PROBLEMS: Personal problems are community problems, of course, but in a different sense. A library-community study is not likely to identify community problems that have not already been recognized, but it can turn a spotlight on them. The need for a new zoning law or for increased traffic safety may exist for a long time before real action is taken. Here the participants are likely to alert the appropriate institutions and organizations to their responsibility. Again the library's role is to supply information, not only to the population at large but particularly to the leaders of the groups involved. Materials, exhibits, group programs and many other means of informing people can be devised by the library to urge and support action on community problems. Not the least of the activities may concern assistance in program planning for organizations interested in solving community problems.

PRIORITIES: The simplest study will probably suggest more change in its services than any library can undertake at once, or even within the foreseeable future. Thus, priorities must be established. They may be based on a variety of approaches. One is quantitative. If the greatest segment of the population consists of people between the ages of 30 to 39, and the principal deterrent of their use of the library is that it is open only three evenings a week and not on Sunday, the first priority is an extension of hours of opening. Or, if across the board the most often identified interests are sports and home decoration, another priority may be set.

Another approach to the setting of priorities is on the basis of importance. Value judgments as to importance are difficult to make and may be somewhat dangerous. The planners -- at all levels -- of the study should have a voice in the selection of the most important results. It may be the concerns of the neglected old, although they are not a large segment of the population. It may be the community problem of inadequate public transportation. It may be the total inadequacy of the library in the eyes of the public. Whatever it is, the fact of its importance requires the marshaling of all the library's resources to serve it as a top priority.

Another approach to the setting of priorities is in terms of an aspect of library service. The building of the collection may

come first, in relation to the findings of the study also arranged in some kind of priority order. Adding material to meet the top interests of all the identified segments of the community may be the goal for the coming year, or adding non-book materials to meet the tastes of the young people (not necessarily the largest segment of the population, but perhaps previously the most neglected) can be the goal. Or plans can be made to bring the collection on public affairs up-to-date, or to add easy-to-read material on money management.

The focus may be not on the collection, but on staff. If public awareness of the library is revealed to be low, a staff member may be involved in a series of one-day meetings concerning attitudes to public service, techniques of the reference interview, reader guidance, and other approaches to the clientele to correct the failing reported by library users.

First emphasis can be on any aspect of the study or of the library, even to the acquisition of more space, or to the addition to the staff of people with advanced library education. Priorities should be carefully set, but it will be the rare library that limits itself to one or fails to involve itself in more than one at a time.

STAFF AND TRUSTEES: The study puts itself to work long before it is finished. Staff and trustees have taken a giant step toward changes when they ask the first question. They have opened the

door to a questioning rather than an accepting attitude. They have emphasized the relationship of the library to the needs and interests of the community it serves. They soon come to recognize the importance of documented information as a basis for action. As the study proceeds, they establish firm relationships with many other institutions and organizations, and with many individuals in the community. What happens to the trustees and the staff taking part in library-community study will influence the library's development for years to come.

EVALUATION: Without doubt, the use of the results of the study as a tool for evaluation is the prime factor in the influence. The study sets a base line. It says the library was like this at such and such a time. With the gathering and interpretation of community data, it becomes evident that the library serves its community well in some ways, passably in others, poorly or not at all in others. From there, a plan for change is instituted. With the methods learned in the initial study, it is possible to test the results of change to know, not guess, what has worked and what has not. Putting the study to work and keeping it working can insure continuous, orderly, relevant development toward the goal of excellent library service for all people in the community.

XIV
READINESS CHECKLIST

In some instances, preliminary work is necessary to bring staff members, trustees, and citizens to a better understanding of the importance of library-community study to the development of significant library service. If most of the following statements are true, the study can begin. If not, time will be well spent in clarifying the library's purposes and functions.

THE STUDY DIRECTOR

* is convinced that the study is needed
* believes in the purposes of the study
* is willing to examine present practices in relation to those purposes
* is willing to ask for the help and advice of others
* is able to convey conviction of the need to others.

THE LIBRARY TRUSTEES

* have written, and understood the purposes of the library
* regularly consider policy decisions in relation to these purposes
* regularly give as much attention to the library's services as they do to the building, finance, and personnel
* regard their role as including the interpretation of the library to the community and the community to the library staff.

THE STAFF MEMBERS

* have frequently worked together on common problems
* are active in community affairs
* want to extend the services of the library into the community.

THE CITIZENS

* show interest in improving the community
* support the library in its activities and in its efforts to secure funds
* are accustomed to participating in library programs and public relations activities, and being asked for advice by the staff and trustees.

XV
SUGGESTED REFERENCES

Titles marked by an asterisk are particularly useful for developing background for lay leaders, trustees and staff members.

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